

## obnafrucepbopitroas

**EVOLUTION:** We seem to be developing ground-rules for this column as we go. Since it draws favorable mail, we'll keep at it. It covers publications we don't normally review—collections, texts, reference works, reprints, editions; for its history, see *American Studies* XXI, 1, 112; for translation of the title, see XXI, 2, 122.

**MARK TWAIN'S LIBRARY: A Reconstruction.** By Alan Gribben. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co. 1980. 2 Vols. \$75.00. A reference work which argues a thesis: we are not to believe Twain's talk about his ignorance; he was well-read. Gribben's care and energy have been correctly praised by early reviewers. Having done the detective work, he assembled the results in a manner which connects what he found to the work of generations of Twain scholars and to the texture of Twain's life and works. Gribben is unquestionably right that Twain is not the unlettered common man trying his hand as an author: that figure was his persona. *Mark Twain's Library* suggests to me that Twain's talk about being the least educated author around is true, however, in an odd sense. He was, in fact, erudite, but he was not, I think, an intellectual. The human situation might trouble him deeply, but logical inconsistency bothered him hardly at all. This journal years ago devoted an issue to Twain. The Twain of our articles was different than the Twain of older accounts, we thought, but our Twain seems consistent with the man who steps from Gribben's pages. Critical of materialism, Twain built a pretentious home; skeptical of progress, he was also fascinated by it, and sunk his fortune in a contraption which caught his imagination because it represented change and progress. Although the author of one of our articles argued that Twain's attitudes

toward the Catholic church developed as his career went on, I thought the evidence illustrated that Twain's attitudes toward it were as inconsistent at the end of his career as they were at the beginning. We children of small-town businessmen know lots of people who are in some ways like Samuel Clemens, though few are also gifted writers. I see in him an odd combination: first, the village talker who plays with ideas for recreation, for the fun of arguing, for conversational sociability, but not for logical continuity; second, the generous and troubled spirit, moved by the human dilemma; third, the entertainer, interested in contrast and effect; and fourth, whenever he is very good, the great artist. Gribben's scholarship reveals the wide range of Clemens' reading and the intelligence of his reactions; it also documents the persnickety persistence of his pose as provocateur or even as ignoramus.

Of Oscar Handlin's *Truth in History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press: 1979), \$17.50, Richard Lowitt writes to say that Handlin finds history "in crisis, in disarray, experiencing serious decay from within," in part because "historians no longer show great respect for facts and the rules of evidence, preferring instead to emphasize techniques and approaches from other disciplines while being unduly influenced by concern for both relevance and relativism." The book consists of 17 essays, a number of them previously published. Most attention is paid to "the fields in which Handlin made notable contributions: ethnic, urban and social history." "The essays reveal Handlin's broad-gauged scholarship and impressive range of understanding."

**THE NECESSITY FOR RUINS: And Other Topics.** By J.B. Jackson. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 1980.

Cloth \$10.00. Paper \$4.95. John Stilgoe of Harvard writes that this "analyzes the contemporary urge to preserve structures, spaces and entire landscapes by deciphering [their] . . . cultural 'messages.'" It emphasizes "evolving meanings of public gardens, private garages, streets and camp-meeting revival groves." It contains two valuable methodological essays, "Learning About Landscapes" and "How to Study the Landscape." "Of chief importance to students of American culture is Jackson's penetrating analysis of the motives underlying 'historic preservation'"; the title essay "focuses on the role of the monument in European and American culture, and stresses that 'ruins provide the incentive for restoration, and for a return to origins.'"

EMILY DICKINSON'S IMAGERY. By Rebecca Patterson. Edited with an introduction by Margaret H. Freeman. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 1979. \$16.00. Vivian R. Pollack of Cheyney State College reports that this "posthumous collection of seven essays [five already published in journals] builds on Patterson's *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson*, a study of the poet's suppressed homoeroticism. Primarily a scrupulous study of image clusters lifted out of context, it eschews close reading of whole poems, lacks an overarching thesis of imagistic function and assumes that Dickinson's short lyrics constitute one total biographical statement."

From George Ehrlich comes word that THE MEMORIES OF AN AMERICAN IMPRESSIONIST, by Abel G. Warschawsky, edited by Ben L. Basham (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press. 1980. \$17.50) is an interesting artist's memoir concentrating on his developmental years in France prior to World War I.

Says Warren French of FILM: A REFERENCE GUIDE, by Robert A. Armour (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 1980. \$29.95): "The most useful beginner's guide so far available to American film study, because Armour combines short but pithy essays on the best books with extended bibliographies. The price may, unfortunately, limit it to library reference shelves."

DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN COMMUNAL AND UTOPIAN HISTORY. By Robert S. Fogarty. Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press. 1980. \$29.95. Howard Segal says that this one is "an indispensable reference work for the student of American utopian communities and includes an illuminating overview of their history, capsule biographies of nearly 150 important utopian theorists and communal leaders, sketches of 59 significant and representative utopian communities, a chronological list of 270 communities founded between 1787 and 1919 and a comprehensive bibliographical essay."

MORE PAMPHLETS in the Western Writers Series, from Boise State University, Boise, Idaho, have arrived: No. 41: *Janet Lewis* by Charles L. Crow; No. 42: *Tom Robbins* by Mark Siegel; No. 43: *Joaquin Miller* by Benjamin S. Lawson; No. 44: *Dorothy Johnson* by Judy Alter; No. 45: *Leslie Marmon Silko* by Per Seyersted.

KEATON: The Man Who Wouldn't Lie Down. By Tom Dardis. London and New York: Penguin Books. 1980. \$4.95. A reprint of the 1970 Scribner's edition. Rich in detail, fascinating and valuable, yet poorly written, badly organized and even unclear.

NOVY AMERICANETZ is a rich new resource worthy of careful analysis by students of immigration, for the traits of its readers which it reflects are often those we associate with older eras. Len Stanton provides this note on its contents: "*Novy Americanetz*, or *The New American*, which claims to be 'America's only Jewish Russian Language Weekly,' has been publishing for over a year. The newspaper features news summaries and numerous signed articles on politics, arts and culture, literature and sports. Recent numbers include a serialized translation of Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*."

"Readers of this journal might be especially interested in *Novy Americanetz's* advertisements. They give a sense of the abundant energy of the Russian Jewish emigre community and the will of those people to improve themselves and to succeed in a new and strange land. Here are a few snatches:

### Get a College Education

Presenting *Heat of Re-Entry*, a new comedy about an emigrant from Russia who lives in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, and writes a play about the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

Grigory works at Kings County Servise [*sic*] Station . . . special rates for cabbies. [a blurry photograph shows us Grigory, standing stiffly, no smile]

Orders accepted for tortes: "Kiev," nut, and poppyseed. Inscriptions 50¢ extra. Call after 12:00.

" 'American' dentists, lawyers and Yiddish-speaking doctors offer their services alongside ads of vacuum cleaner salesmen and fix-it men. Carpet and furniture ads abound.

"The sports section of one recent number reflects the dilemma faced by many of these 'New Americans.' Aleksey Orlov laments that baseball is an inscrutable

game. He has tried guidebooks and rule-books, paid close attention to the words of television commentators, but baseball terminology remains for him obscure, and he likens the experience to a bout with Chinese grammar. The author comes to the conclusion that the best method of initiation is to become familiar with the game's stars—the human approach. He then embarks on a quite good article about George Brett's quest for a .40 [*sic*] batting average. For those 'New Americans' who have not yet succeeded in severing ties to the USSR, the next page offers a piece about the ever-popular Tbilisi 'Dynamo' soccer team.

"The paper's editor, Sergei Dovlatov, writes, '*Novy Americanetz* can already be found in many American university libraries, and is used as course material for American students studying the Russian language.' "

The paper's address is:

Novy Americanetz Inc.  
500 8th Ave., Suite 1204  
New York, N.Y. 10018.